On this day in 1945, the United Nations Charter, which was adopted and signed on June 26, 1945, is now effective and ready to be enforced.

The United Nations was born of perceived necessity, as a means of better arbitrating international conflict and negotiating peace than was provided for by the old League of Nations. The growing Second World War became the real impetus for the [United States](http://www.history.com/topics/states), Britain, and the Soviet Union to begin formulating the original U.N. Declaration, signed by 26 nations in January 1942, as a formal act of opposition to Germany, Italy, and Japan, the Axis Powers.

The principles of the U.N. Charter were first formulated at the [San Francisco](http://www.history.com/topics/san-francisco) Conference, which convened on April 25, 1945. It was presided over by President [Franklin Roosevelt](http://www.history.com/topics/franklin-d-roosevelt), British Prime Minister [Winston Churchill](http://www.history.com/topics/winston-churchill), and Soviet Premier [Joseph Stalin](http://www.history.com/topics/joseph-stalin), and attended by representatives of 50 nations, including 9 continental European states, 21 North, Central, and South American republics, 7 Middle Eastern states, 5 British Commonwealth nations, 2 Soviet republics (in addition to the USSR itself), 2 East Asian nations, and 3 African states. The conference laid out a structure for a new international organization that was to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,...to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights,...to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."

Two other important objectives described in the Charter were respecting the principles of equal rights and self-determination of all peoples (originally directed at smaller nations now vulnerable to being swallowed up by the Communist behemoths emerging from the war) and international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems around the world.

Now that the war was over, negotiating and maintaining the peace was the practical responsibility of the new U.N. Security Council, made up of the United States, Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and China. Each would have veto power over the other. Winston Churchill called for the United Nations to employ its charter in the service of creating a new, united Europe-united in its opposition to communist expansion-East and West. Given the composition of the Security Council, this would prove easier said than done.